

**A Celebration of the Life  
of Whitney R. Harris**



**August 12, 1912 — April 22, 2010**

# Whitney R. Harris

Whitney R. Harris was born in Seattle, Washington, on August 12, 1912, the son of Olin Whitney and Lily Georgine Harris. He attended the University of Washington, where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and graduated in 1933 with an A.B. degree, *magna cum laude*. He received his J.D. from the University of California in Berkeley in 1936.

Mr. Harris practiced law in Los Angeles from 1936 to 1942 as a partner at Goodspeed, McGuire, Harris, and Pfaff. He served as president of the Junior Bar of Los Angeles, and, when World War II broke out, entered the U.S. Navy as an ensign.

Toward the end of the war, Harris was assigned for special duty with the Office of Strategic Services, and placed in charge of investigating war crimes in Europe. In August 1945, then-Lieutenant Harris was assigned to the trial of the major German war criminals at Nuremberg, Germany. He served throughout the trial until its close, and was responsible for the prosecution of Ernst Kaltenbrunner, the Gestapo, and the SD. He obtained direct evidence of the Holocaust, including the confession of Rudolf Hoess, the Commander of Auschwitz Concentration Camp. He was the only prosecutor present in the Palace of Justice the night the defendants were executed.

Following Nuremberg, Mr. Harris served in Berlin until 1948. He returned to the United States to become a law professor at Southern Methodist University and in 1953-54, served as chairman of the International Law Section of the ABA. In 1954, he was appointed staff director of legal services for the Hoover Commission, for which he was decorated by former President Herbert Hoover. He served as the first executive director of the ABA and, in 2005, was named Distinguished Lawyer of the Year by the Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis.

In 1954, Mr. Harris published the first comprehensive book on the Nuremberg Trial, entitled *Tyranny on Trial, the Evidence at Nuremberg*. Described by *The New York Times* as “masterly and meticulous” and “a book of enduring importance,” it is the only book on the Nuremberg Trial with a foreword written by Justice Jackson and the only volume on the trial translated into German. A later edition of the book reviews legal proceedings after Nuremberg and discusses the Statute for the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Mr. Harris was a delegate to the 1998 Rome Conference that established the ICC. He believed in the court and wrote of these historic events: “Nuremberg and Rome stand against the resignation of humanity to its self-debasement and self-destruction. The achievements of that great trial and historic conference in elevating justice and law over inhumanity and war give hope for a better tomorrow.”

Mr. Harris lectured at universities in the United States and abroad and published widely. He was the author of two recent books entitled *The Tragedy of War* and *Murder by the Millions*. Mr. Harris’ decorations include the U.S. Legion of Merit (the highest award received by any trial counsel); the German Order of Merit, Officer’s Class; and the Medal of the War Crimes Commission of Poland.

Mr. Harris was a strong supporter of philanthropic causes and was named National Fund-Raising Volunteer by the Society of National Fund-Raising Executives in 1985. In 2009, he received the Special Award in Philanthropy from the St. Louis Regional Chapter of the Association of Fund Raising Professionals. In 1980, Mr. Harris established the Whitney R. Harris Collection on the Third Reich of Germany at Washington University and, in 2002, funded the Whitney R. Harris World Law Institute at Washington University School of Law. In 1999, Jane and Whitney Harris established the Jane and Whitney Harris Community Service Award at Washington University. In 2004, he funded the Whitney and Anna Harris Conservation Forum at the University of Missouri in St. Louis, as well as similar projects at the Winston Churchill Memorial in Missouri and at McKendree University, where he served as a member of its board of trustees. In 2006, he funded the World Ecology Center at the University of Missouri in St. Louis, where he also established the Jane and Whitney Harris Lecture Series.

Mr. Harris holds honorary degrees from the University of Missouri in St. Louis, McKendree University, and Maryville University. His biography appears in *Who’s Who*, and concludes with the following quotation from *Tyranny on Trial*: “Tyranny leads to inhumanity, and inhumanity to death. Let us resolve that tyranny shall not extend its sway, nor war become its game — placing our faith in the cause of justice, in the freedom of man, and in the mercy of God.”



*The challenge to humanity is to establish and maintain the foundations of peace and justice upon the Earth for the centuries to come. We must learn to end war and protect life, to seek justice and find mercy, to help others and embrace compassion.*

Whitney Harris - St. Louis, Missouri  
As written and recorded for NPR, June 12, 2006